

174 signers  
13 January 2001 - 1 February 2006

Linguist and social critic  
Noam Chomsky helped to solicit  
the signatures on this open letter

To: Marc Brodsky, Executive Director  
American Institute of Physics  
One Physics Ellipse  
College Park, Maryland 20740

Dear Dr. Brodsky:

As individuals concerned with freedom of expression and freedom to organize, we were dismayed to learn of your recent dismissal of Jeff Schmidt, who had been an articles editor at *Physics Today* magazine for over 19 years. We urge you to reconsider your decision.

As we understand it, you fired Jeff after you saw his book, *Disciplined Minds*, and in particular after your discovery that Jeff used some of his spare time at the office for critical writing. You were evidently not deterred by the fact that during the years that Jeff was writing the book, *Physics Today* gave him two promotions and 19 salary increases based explicitly on the quantity and quality of his work for the magazine, which it scrutinized closely.

The fact that you dismissed Jeff after so many years of service not only without a hearing, but also without asking him a single question about the book or anything else, suggests that you were looking for an opportunity to get rid of him. Indeed, we understand that you were displeased with Jeff's workplace activism and had tried to silence him through a number of very repressive measures short of dismissal.

As you know, Jeff worked with other *Physics Today* staff members to improve working conditions, increase staff participation in decision-making, broaden the narrow range of viewpoints allowed in the magazine, make the salary structure fairer and diversify the staff. (At the time you fired Jeff, *Physics Today's* large editorial staff was all white above the secretarial level.)

Because you are the head of the American Institute of Physics, your repressive actions harm the reputation of physicists. Worse, your actions discourage free expression and organizing, and thereby work against democracy and social progress. We ask you to take a step toward undoing the damage you have done. Give Jeff his job back.

Sincerely, (affiliations listed for identification only)

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**Items in envelope soliciting signatures from members of  
Scholars, Artists and Writers for Social Justice**

1. Cover letter from Noam Chomsky and Matt Siegel. (One side)
2. Letter to Marc Brodsky. (One side)
3. Background information by Jean Kumagai. (One side)
4. Three articles. (Five sides)
5. Postcard.

Total: Four sheets of paper (8 sides) plus a postcard.

Dear SAWSJ member,

In the American workplace, speaking out for your principles can be risky. As you may have heard, fellow SAWSJ member Jeff Schmidt was recently reminded of this fact when *Physics Today* magazine gave his book *Disciplined Minds* a punishing review: The magazine fired him.

Jeff was an editor at *Physics Today* (published by the nonprofit American Institute of Physics, a major academic publisher) for 19 years — until his supervisors saw *Disciplined Minds* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), a thought-provoking, radical critique of the social role of salaried professionals.

The company apparently seized upon the irreverent book as an opportunity to retaliate against Jeff for his workplace activism at the magazine. For more details, take a look at the enclosed statement from a former *Physics Today* staff member, and articles from *Washington City Paper*, *Lingua Franca* and *The Texas Observer*.

We are writing to ask you to join us in protesting Jeff's dismissal, by adding your name to the letter on the other side of this page, a copy of which will be sent to the head of the American Institute of Physics. A copy of the letter will also be posted on the Web (at [www.disciplined-minds.com](http://www.disciplined-minds.com)) and sent to journalists. If you wish to add your name to the letter, you can use the enclosed postcard or send an e-mail message to [friends\\_of\\_jeff@hotmail.com](mailto:friends_of_jeff@hotmail.com). Please ask others to add their names, too.

Of course, you can also write directly to the head of the American Institute of Physics (Marc H. Brodsky, [brodsky@aip.org](mailto:brodsky@aip.org)). If you do so, please send a copy of your letter to [friends\\_of\\_jeff@hotmail.com](mailto:friends_of_jeff@hotmail.com) so that it can be posted on the Web.

Your support will make a big difference.

Sincerely,



Noam Chomsky  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Cambridge, Massachusetts



Matt Siegel  
Former *Physics Today* staff member  
[matthew\\_siegel@mindspring.com](mailto:matthew_siegel@mindspring.com)

Marc Brodsky, Executive Director  
American Institute of Physics  
One Physics Ellipse  
College Park, Maryland 20740

Dear Dr. Brodsky:

As individuals concerned with freedom of expression and freedom to organize, we were dismayed to learn of your recent dismissal of Jeff Schmidt, who had been an articles editor at *Physics Today* magazine for over 19 years. We urge you to reconsider your decision.

As we understand it, you fired Jeff after you saw his book, *Disciplined Minds*, and in particular after your discovery that Jeff used some of his spare time at the office for critical writing. You were evidently not deterred by the fact that during the years that Jeff was writing the book, *Physics Today* gave him two promotions and 19 salary increases based explicitly on the quantity and quality of his work for the magazine, which it scrutinized closely.

The fact that you dismissed Jeff after so many years of service not only without a hearing, but also without asking him a single question about the book or anything else, suggests that you were looking for an opportunity to get rid of him. Indeed, we understand that you were displeased with Jeff's workplace activism and had tried to silence him through a number of very repressive measures short of dismissal.

As you know, Jeff worked with other *Physics Today* staff members to improve working conditions, increase staff participation in decision-making, broaden the narrow range of viewpoints allowed in the magazine, make the salary structure fairer and diversify the staff. (At the time you fired Jeff, *Physics Today*'s large editorial staff was all white above the secretarial level.)

Because you are the head of the American Institute of Physics, your repressive actions harm the reputation of physicists. Worse, your actions discourage free expression and organizing, and thereby work against democracy and social progress. We ask you to take a step toward undoing the damage you have done. Give Jeff his job back.

Sincerely, (affiliations listed for identification only)

# Background information about Jeff Schmidt and *Disciplined Minds*

By Jean Kumagai

*Work is an inherently political activity, and those who do it should resist the political subordination that their employers demand.*

An insubordinate viewpoint such as this calls for an insubordinate tone, and so Jeff Schmidt opens *Disciplined Minds* by dramatizing the fact that he wrote the book in part at the office — forgoing more common breake-time diversions such as surfing the web, exchanging personal e-mail and making personal phone calls.

For reasons explained below, the *Physics Today* managers who fired Jeff, a staff editor for 19 years, wanted people to read this provocative opening as a confession to a crime and not just as an announcement of an attitude.

Jeff had been a workplace activist at *Physics Today* (the world's biggest physics magazine), and management was clearly eager to get rid of him. They had already tried unsuccessfully to stifle his expression with repressive measures just short of dismissal. They apparently thought the book looked so radical that no one would object if they fired him. They were wrong. To date, there have been many protests: by sixteen former *Physics Today* staff members, by the National Writers Union and by many individuals. Even the state, after an unemployment benefits hearing, rejected the company's charge. (Details are posted on the web at [www.disciplined-minds.com](http://www.disciplined-minds.com), along with the protest letters and information about the book.)

While at the magazine, Jeff worked with other staff members to improve working conditions, increase staff participation in decision-making, broaden the narrow range of viewpoints allowed in the magazine, make the salary structure fairer and diversify the staff. That last issue proved to be the most contentious. As of 1 January 2001, *Physics Today* had an all-white staff of 16 editors (and an all-minority secretarial staff of 3). Despite *Physics Today*'s claim that it is an affirmative action employer, its editors look nothing like the physics community, the journalism community, the Washington, D.C., community where the magazine is based, or the nation as a whole.

*Physics Today* has a history of trying to stifle staff organizing and narrow the range of opinions expressed in the workplace — and in the magazine. At one point, for example, the managers put gag orders on Jeff and another outspoken employee, warning that they would be fired if they said anything “counterproductive.” These orders were eventually lifted due to pressure from coworkers. Incredibly, *Physics Today* also banned private conversations in the workplace, saying that all

conversations between staff members must be open to monitoring by managers. In light of this history, *Physics Today*'s response to *Disciplined Minds* is less surprising.

The American Institute of Physics, which publishes *Physics Today*, is affiliated with the University of Maryland, and so Jeff's firing cost him his library and other privileges at the university. Jeff believes that as a matter of principle he should not lose his library privileges for writing a radical book. So he plans to appeal to the university, which is a state institution, noting that the state of Maryland itself found no misconduct on his part.

Jeff is asking *Physics Today* to offer him his job back. Many people, including former coworkers, have encouraged him to take legal action, and he hopes to do that. However, while there are some legal limits on just how repressive an employer can be, there are not many. So public pressure will be decisive. Even if it doesn't force *Physics Today* to reinstate Jeff, it holds the company accountable for its actions. Every letter of protest takes a toll on the company's all-important image, reduces its ability to cavalierly dismiss dissidents in the future, and pressures it to maintain a more open and democratic workplace.

Please consider signing the enclosed letter or writing your own letter. You can also spread the word by telling your friends and colleagues about Jeff's case, by linking your web site to <http://www.disciplined-minds.com> and, if you are an instructor, by informing your students. (The book itself is available in many libraries, and the web site has a link to an examination-copy request page.)

Finally, don't hesitate to contact Jeff with any comments, suggestions or questions you may have. Here's where you can reach him...

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[www.disciplined-minds.com](http://www.disciplined-minds.com)  
202-537-3645

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Jean Kumagai ([jean\\_kumagai@hotmail.com](mailto:jean_kumagai@hotmail.com)), a former staff editor at *Physics Today*, now works at *IEEE Spectrum*, an engineering magazine based in New York City.

# Losing Their Religion



## BOOKS

immigrant Korean women or improve the transparency of the political campaign system. So they dutifully went to law school or enrolled in graduate programs in political science. Now, as they near graduation, some of them talk of the intellectual satisfactions of protecting major-label record companies against Internet interlopers or of maximizing the efficiency of New York's workfare program. What happened?

Is it that the graduates, older and wiser, have found a weakness in their adolescent dreams of social justice and democratic improvement? Or is it that the system of graduate education itself eviscerated their aspirations?

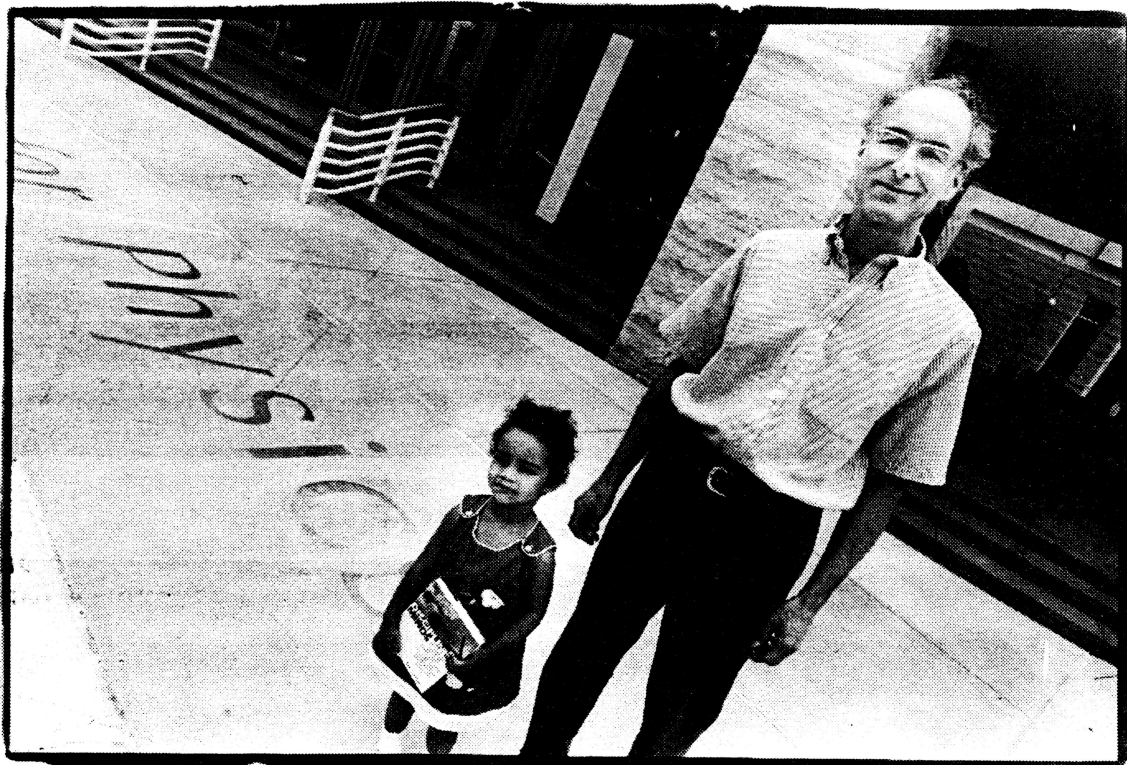
D.C. resident Jeff Schmidt would say that these newly minted professionals are still making a difference in society—just not the kind they'd once hoped to make. Indeed, he argues in *Disciplined Minds: A Critical Look at Salaried Professionals and the Soul-Battering System That Shapes Their Lives* (Rowman & Littlefield) that students' professional choices—and the lifetime of decisions they can look forward to making as professionals—have a more powerful impact on democracy than their votes do. The reason, he says, that 80 percent of the entering students at Harvard Law School say they want to pursue a career in public service but 90 percent take jobs at corporate law firms after graduation is that the professional world demands their “ideological discipline,” or adherence to an assigned point of view. Professional education transforms not just what you know, but who you think you are as well.

Schmidt, a former editor of the College Park, Md.-based science monthly *Physics Today*, has collected two decades of reflection on the problem of graduate training and professional life into his 280-page book. Schmidt holds a Ph.D. in physics from the University of California, Irvine, but you don't have to be a laser jock or lab rat to see that graduate programs combine sleep deprivation, too much work, rigorous competition, social isolation, and pressure to pursue particular pathways—and force students to accept the regimen or be booted from the program. This is a strategy designed to reshape a young person's social and political preferences, says Schmidt. “[Students] enter professional training with deeply held feelings about the personal and societal promise of professional work, and during professional training struggle against what often amounts to a brutal attempt to change their very identities,” he writes. The struggle of their lives, as any disgruntled associate at a law firm will tell you, is to square their beliefs with the bullying of their profession.

To lessen the conflicts, says Schmidt, the professions require that future workers be transformed while they're still trainees. These transformed employees then can “work within an assigned ideology rather than from a specific list of tasks, because the professional works with unpredictable events,” says the 54-year-old author. And

so the creative work goes to those who can be trusted not to stray from the path, while more creative types often find themselves working as waiters. (Schmidt does not except journalists from his critique of the professions.)

Schmidt's effort to help grad students resist their indoctrination through such chapters as “How to Survive Professional Training with Your Values Intact” was met with some resistance at *Physics Today*. In late May, Schmidt was fired after 19 years on the job, he says, for allegedly writing the book on company time. He successfully contested that charge with the State of Maryland Department of Labor and is now collecting unemployment benefits.



We're All Dissonant Beings: Jeff Schmidt with future worker (and daughter) Joshua Rose Schmidt

“The people who were most concerned about others seemed to be the least likely to survive,” says Schmidt of his time in grad school. Not much seems to have changed for him, even in the work-world.

—Garance Franke-Ruta

WASHINGTON  
**CityPaper**  
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# Field Notes

Linguafranca

## STEALING TIME

HOW SERIOUSLY SHOULD one take the chest-thumping rhetorical flourishes of a manifesto? Abbie Hoffman may have urged his readers to “steal this book,” but surely he might have conceded that yeah, okay, he was counting on royalties. Similarly, when Jeff Schmidt pays homage to Hoffman by kicking off his recent book with the sentences “This book is stolen. Written in part on stolen time, that is,” he doesn’t mean it literally.

Or does he? His bosses thought so. The question now lies at the heart of a dispute between Schmidt and his former employers at *Physics Today*, a 121,000-circulation magazine published by the American Institute of Physics in College Park, Maryland.

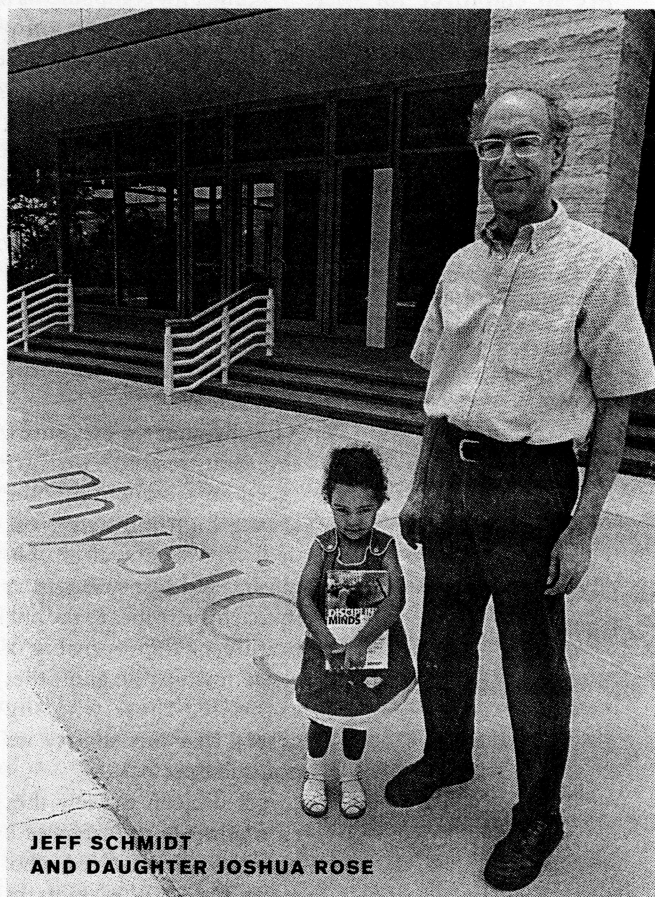
In *Disciplined Minds: A Critical Look at Salaried Professionals and the Soul-Battering System That Shapes Their Lives* (Rowman & Littlefield), Schmidt assails the conformity that professional life demands and offers some self-help-ish tips to those sweating in their white collars. After the attention-grabbing opening line, he goes on to explain what he means by “stolen time”: “Like millions of others who work for a living...my job simply didn’t leave me enough energy for a major project of my own.... So, I began spending some office time on my own work, dumped my TV to reappropriate some of my spare time

at home, and wrote this book.” Soon after his bosses read that, Schmidt says, they marched him to the human-resources office, had someone retrieve his personal effects, and told him that they never wanted to see him again. It was clear, they said, that he wasn’t “fully engaged” in his work.

Since that unhappy day, physicists and journalists have

rallied around Schmidt to try to help him get his job back. He insists he’s been canned for workplace activism and the “attitude crime” of writing a subversive book. Although he adopts a rebellious stance in his book—and describes himself as a political radical—he is a good worker, he insists. He has also taken a few baby steps away from the bold

Schmidt believes he was fired for writing a subversive book while at work.



JEFF SCHMIDT  
AND DAUGHTER JOSHUA ROSE

CHARLES STECK

claims in his introduction. "They have a one-hour unpaid lunch period and a total of a half hour of break time," Schmidt explains. "When I was working on the book during unpaid break time, it *felt* as though I was working on stolen time." The publisher of *Physics Today*, Randolph Nanna, and the human-resources director of the American Institute of Physics declined to comment on the case. But if the "stolen time" claim was the sole reason for letting Schmidt go, the incident raises an interesting question: Can you fire an employee for what he claims to have done, without checking to see if he's bluffing?

*Disciplined Minds* has more to do with academia than you'd guess from its subtitle. Inveighing against the injustices visited upon salaried professionals, Schmidt takes his own profession, physics, as his main case study. He recalls that, in 1980, the head of his graduate adviser's research group at the University of California at Irvine wanted Schmidt's dissertation typed up on a rush order, just to get rid of him—Schmidt had apparently stirred up too much trouble with his criticisms of nuclear-weapons programs and his advocacy on behalf of another student who had flunked out. The high rate of attrition in physics especially caught his attention. "What I noticed was that the dropout rate was not politically neutral," he says. "To

put it bluntly, the program favored ass kissers." As does all professional training, he might add. And exposure to such pressures leads to political conformity: He claims that in 1972, the most educated Americans were the most likely to oppose withdrawal from Vietnam.

Yet do not despair, says this veteran of the 1960s (Schmidt is fifty-four), whose book is adorned with glowing blurbs from Howard Zinn, Stanley Aronowitz, and Michael Bérubé: One can carve out space for freethinking. He urges readers to lose their hunger for compliments from superiors and to "pursue your own goals while supposedly pursuing your employer's goal." Other proposals are more out there: He reprints an army manual for surviving as a prisoner of war, with the suggestion that readers mentally "substitute 'graduate or professional school' for 'PW camp.'"

Schmidt apparently put some of these suggestions into practice. At *Physics Today*, he argued vociferously for such reforms as the elimination of salary inequities among editors and the hiring of members of minority groups. In 1997, after he refused to pipe down at a company retreat, he was warned, in writing, that his "destructive and counterproductive" behavior would no longer be tolerated. In the last couple of years, his performance evaluations were downgraded from superior to satisfactory, he says, yet he

insists he stayed ahead of schedule on his work. "He was their best articles editor before they fired him," says Jean Kumagai, who left *Physics Today* last year for *IEEE Spectrum*, an engineering magazine in New York.

So far, the American Institute of Physics has not been moved by Schmidt's pleas, nor by supportive letters from his friends and colleagues. Maryland's Department of Labor, however, sided with him in one important matter, granting him unemployment benefits. The agency concluded that the AIP had presented insufficient information to show that his actions constituted misconduct. According to Michael Gottesman, a specialist in labor law at the Georgetown University Law Center, however, that victory won't give Schmidt much leverage in court should he decide to sue for wrongful dismissal. States are required to prove a former employee guilty of egregious misconduct before they can deny unemployment benefits. But as an at-will employee, lacking a contract, Schmidt can be fired for any reason not barred by an employment discrimination statute—even, theoretically, for writing a dull book, not just a controversial one.

But if Schmidt did snatch a few minutes here and there to work on his book, he notes that there are compelling precedents in physics for such petty larceny. Where would physics be if Albert Einstein

hadn't stolen a few moments from the Swiss Patent Office, where he was employed when he worked out the implications of relativity?

**CHRISTOPHER SHEA**



# A Mind of One's Own

## *The Chains of "Professional" Employment*

BY CHRIS GARLOCK

### **DISCIPLINED MINDS:**

*A Critical Look at Salaried Professionals and the Soul-Battering System that Shapes Their Lives.*

By Jeff Schmidt.

Rowman & Littlefield.

293 pages. \$26.95.

"This book is stolen." Jeff Schmidt's provocative opening to his book cost him his job: the ink was barely dry on the pages when Schmidt's employer called him in and summarily dismissed him, barely giving him enough time to pack his personal effects. Schmidt's offense was his forthright admission that *Disciplined Minds* had been written in part on time "stolen" from his employer. "I felt I had no choice but to do it that way," Schmidt writes in his introduction. "Like millions of others who work for a living, I was giving most of my prime time to my employer.... No one was about to hire me to pursue my own vision, especially given my irreverent attitude towards employers."

So Schmidt started spending office time writing *Disciplined Minds*, a book, appropriately, about "professionals, their role in society and the hidden battle over personal identity that rages in professional education and employment." The great strength — and weakness — of *Disciplined Minds* is that it reads like a book written largely on the job: an uncomfortable see-sawing between constant glancing-over-the-shoulder nervousness and a powerful undercurrent of anger and bravado. Like the burned-out co-worker who can't seem to help telling you way more than you ever wanted to know about the latest injustice from the Head Office, Schmidt has gotten hold of a very real problem, and refuses to turn loose until he's laid it out in excruciating detail. Judging by the reaction so far (see sidebar, "Work is Work"), it looks like Schmidt has hit the bull's-eye. But there's also some fairly convincing evidence out there to suggest that larger social forces may well be stirring.

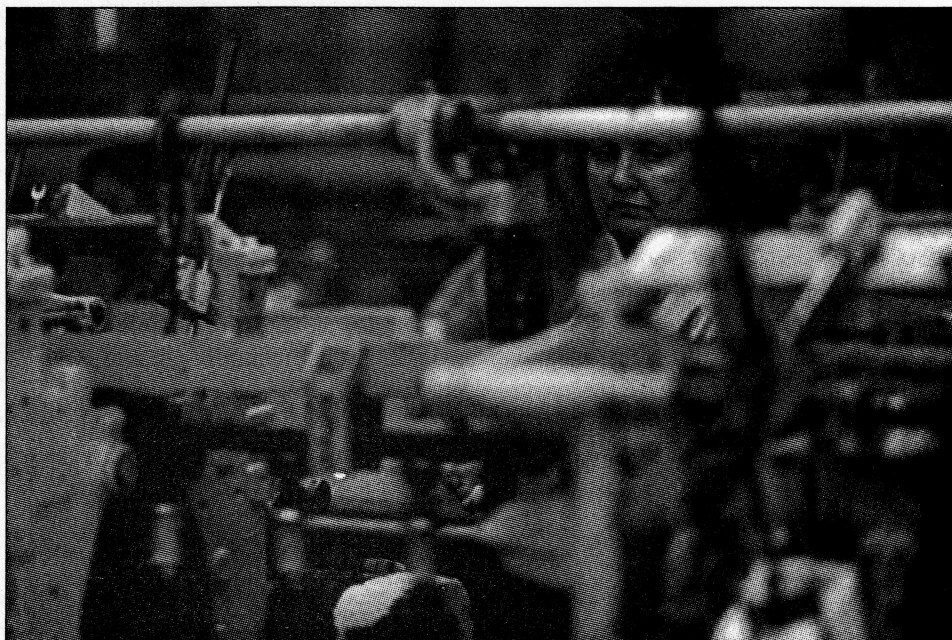
Stockbrokers are doing it. So are lawyers, rocket scientists, and doctors. Joining unions, that is. Maybe not in huge numbers yet, but then the battles in the streets of Flint began years earlier in small shops, as workers began organizing to regain control of their lives on the job. This looming struggle between workers and bosses — which will play out this time in carpeted offices amid the silent hum of air-conditioning — differs only in degree from the bloody strikes, lock-outs, and sit-ins of the last great battles over the American workplace back in the Thirties.

At the same time that blue-collar workers are once more taking to the nation's streets — janitors have blocked traffic in major cities across the nation this year in their increasingly successful quest for justice — many of America's 21 million professionals are beginning to reject the trade-off of a comfortable salary and a cushy desk job for mind-numbing meaningless work. What's going on? Unions have been a shrinking percentage of the workforce for decades now, victims of their own success, as union members ascended to the American middle class and all the middle-management ethos

that implies.

Problem is, the house, the car, and the summer vacation isn't enough any more. Never was, in fact. The battles in Flint (and elsewhere, of course; Flint serves here as a useful flashpoint and metaphor) were much more about workplace control issues — line speed and the right to organize, for example — as they were about wages and hours. "The hidden root of much career dissatisfaction is the professional's lack of control over the 'political' component of his or her creative work," argues Schmidt. Today's professionals, far from being independent, creative "partners," turn out to be just as much cogs in the machine as the blue-collar guy tightening bolts eight soul-numbing hours a day on the assembly line.

To update the metaphor, perhaps a more accurate description of the professional is as micro-processor, buried deep and invisibly in the computer innards, forever relaying instructions. "Professionals sell to their employers more than their ordinary labor power, their ability to carry out instructions," writes Schmidt. "They also sell their ideological labor power, their ability to ex-



▲ On the shop floor, wherever you are

Scott Van Osdol

tend those instructions to new situations.... Professionals implement their employers' attitudes as well as their employer's lists of instructions." In other words, unlike assembly-line workers, who only sell their blood and sweat eight hours a day, today's professionals rent out our brains, twenty-four/seven. We have become, not our own bosses — in the beloved entrepreneurial fantasy — but The Boss Him (or rarely, Her) self.

A paradox, then. Professionals are by definition independent and self-directed. (Else how could they be capable of carrying out high-level tasks such as an employer's attitudes?) Yet to be useful to employers, they must be molded as firmly as the time-and-motion directives for assembly-line workers instruct.

The answer lies in the selection, training, and accreditation of professionals. "The intellectual boot camp known as graduate or professional school, with its cold-blooded expulsions and creeping indoctrination, systematically grinds down the student's spirit and ultimately produces obedient thinkers — highly educated employees who do their assigned work," writes Schmidt, "without questioning its goals." "Professional education is a battle for the very identity of the individual, as is professional employment," he warns, in language that workers of any age of change and discontent would recognize.

Last year, as I was passing out rally leaflets at a downtown Washington Metro stop on a weekday morning, I was stunned at the steady stream of resigned faces pouring up out of the subway. Expressions of exhaustion and frustration that would have been perfectly understandable after a hard day at the office, were simply astonishing to see first thing in the morning. "An unsatisfying work life is much more than a 40-hour-per week problem," Schmidt notes, "because of its profound effect on your morale while you are off the job. You may be pained to think of it as such, but your job is probably the biggest project of your life.... Thus, for all practical purposes, your life's work is at stake."

Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your minds. □

*Chris Garlock steals time professionally in Washington, D.C.*

**O**n June 26, the Maryland Department of Labor issued a ruling rejecting *Physics Today's* claim that author Jeff Schmidt engaged in misconduct on the job by writing *Disciplined Minds* while working at the magazine. The central question was why *Physics Today* fired Schmidt: the company claimed it was because of his "misconduct," while Schmidt says that "management didn't like the radical content of the book, and was looking for an excuse to get rid of me because of my workplace activism." After an investigation, Department of Labor examiner Tasha Owens ruled that Schmidt's work on the book didn't even rise to the level of "simple misconduct," let alone the more serious "gross misconduct" or "aggravated misconduct," and awarded him full benefits, retroactive to June 4, 2000.

A key factor in the decision seems to have been that *Physics Today* never bothered asking Schmidt how much office time he spent writing the book, even though they ostensibly fired him for working on a personal project on company time. "The ruling means that *Physics Today* fired me for a reason other than 'misconduct in connection with the work,'" Schmidt said. "Who will see that reason as anything other than political misconduct?"

Plenty of people, apparently, and not just bosses. Responding to reports on the Schmidt firing in the National Writers Union D.C. local's weekly e-zine (which I edit), writer A. Warren wrote, "In every office I've ever worked in, it would be considered highly unprofessional to do personal work on office time, even if one's assignments were completed. It wouldn't even be tolerated in support staff, let alone writers or other professionals.

"Would Schmidt feel justified in leaving the office for the day whenever he finished his current assignments? I think not. But that's in effect what he did, whenever he worked on his book during office hours. While on company time, he had a moral (and probably legal) obligation to seek out other work-related tasks; that's what he was being paid for. Had he done so, he might have earned better performance reviews than 'satisfactory' and 'above average,' and he'd probably still have his job."

Although these sentiments were echoed in a number of other responses, many others who wrote in to defend Schmidt made the connection with blue-collar work issues explicit. "I can remember years ago my dad telling me about the crane operators that worked on the landfill in Staten Island," wrote Bill. "Their job was to load a certain number of garbage scows every day. The scows were barged out to sea, where the bottom of each one was opened and the garbage dumped to the ocean floor. When the crane men were able to load the set number of scows in less than the eight-hour shift and wanted to go home, my dad was incensed. First, he was angry that these guys thought that they should get a day's pay for fewer hours than it took to do the job. Second, he told them that once it became known that they were being more productive that there would be an expectation that they should produce more. Perhaps management's problem was that if Schmidt could do his job in less time then maybe he could have done more...."

Jim was even more blunt in his critique: "Corporations maintain they are the judge and sole arbiter of how much time each employee must spend on work. Their lackey Congress concedes this right to them. The result is that Americans are working more hours than two decades ago, for less pay. But work time is not theirs to determine. They can ask for what they want, but the amount must be agreed to by negotiation with the workers themselves. The idea that corporations should control this work issue is dehumanizing and abhorrent."

Finally, for an interesting historical footnote on the question of "stealing time" from work, I recently ran across the following in Carl Sagan's *Broca's Brain*:

*At the Patent Office, Einstein "soon learned to do his chores more efficiently and this let him snatch precious morsels of time for his own surreptitious calculations, which he guiltily hid in a drawer when footsteps approached." Such were the circumstances attending the birth of the great Relativity Theory.*

"In 1905," Sagan continues, "Einstein published four research papers, the product of his spare time at the Swiss Patent Office." The papers, of course, included the famous equation  $E = mc^2$  which, among other things, says that although energy and mass can neither be created nor destroyed, one form of energy or matter can be converted into another form.

Or, to put it another way, work is work. — C.G.

## Stealing Time A Theory of Relativity

Please add my name to the letter protesting the dismissal of Jeff Schmidt.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_  
(such as dept.  
and institution;  
to be listed for  
identification  
only)

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(not to be listed)



**Matthew Siegel**  
**1320 21st Street NW #506**  
**Washington, DC 20036**

Please add my name to the letter protesting the dismissal of Jeff Schmidt.

Name:

Noam Chomsky

Affiliation  
(such as department  
and institution;  
to be listed for  
identification only)

Linguistics

MIT

Cambridge MA 02139

E-mail address  
(not to be listed)

chomsky@mit.edu

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Noam Chomsky', written in a cursive style.